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WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1	1. A set of nucleic acids comprising:
2	a first nucleic acid containing SEQ ID NO:1 or 3, and
3	a second nucleic acid containing SEQ ID NO:2 or 4,
4	wherein each nucleic acid is 18-40 nucleotides in length.

- The set of nucleic acids of claim 1, wherein the first nucleic acid contains

 SEO ID NO:1 and the second nucleic acid contains SEQ ID NO:2.
 - 3. The set of nucleic acids of claim 2, wherein each nucleic acid is 18-30 nucleotides in length.
 - 4. The set of nucleic acids of claim 3, wherein the first nucleic acid is SEQ ID NO:1 and the second nucleic acid is SEQ ID NO:2.
 - 5. The set of nucleic acids of claim 1, wherein the first nucleic acid contains SEQ ID NO:3 and the second nucleic acid contains SEQ ID NO:4.
 - 6. The set of nucleic acids of claim 5, wherein each nucleic acid is 24-32 nucleotides in length.
 - 7. The set of nucleic acids of claim 6, wherein the first nucleic acid is SEQ ID NO:3 and the second nucleic acid is SEQ ID NO:4.
- 8. A nucleic acid obtained from amplification of an *Escherichia coli* nucleic acid template with an upstream primer containing SEQ ID NO:1 or 3 and a downstream primer containing SEQ ID NO:2 or 4, wherein each primer is 18-40 nucleotides in length.
- 9. The nucleic acid of claim 8, wherein the upstream primer contains SEQ ID NO:1 and the downstream primer contains SEQ ID NO:2.

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The nucleic acid of claim 18, wherein said nucleic acid is SEQ ID NO:6.

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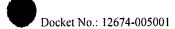
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- The nucleic acid of claim 18, wherein said nucleic acid is SEQ ID NO:7. 21.
- The nucleic acid of claim 18, wherein said nucleic acid is SEQ ID NO:8. 22. 1
- The nucleic acid of claim 15, wherein said nucleic acid is SEQ ID NO:5. 23. 1
- The nucleic acid of claim 15, wherein said nucleic acid is SEQ ID NO:6. 24. 1
 - The nucleic acid of claim 15, wherein said nucleic acid is SEQ ID NO:7. 25.
 - The nucleic acid of claim 15, wherein said nucleic acid is SEQ ID NO:8. 26.
 - 27. A method of detecting *Escherichia coli*, comprising: providing a sample having a nucleic acid from an unknown microorganism; amplifying the nucleic acid with an upstream primer containing SEQ ID NO:1 or 3 and a downstream primer containing SEQ ID NO:2 or 4, each primer being 18-40 nucleotides in length; and

detecting an amplification product; whereby detection of the amplification product indicates the presence of Escherichia coli.

- 28. The method of claim 27, wherein the upstream primer contains SEQ ID NO:1 and the downstream primer contains SEQ ID NO:2.
 - The method of claim 28, wherein each primer is 18-30 nucleotides in length. 29.
- The method of claim 29, wherein the detecting step includes hybridizing the 30. amplification product to a nucleic acid probe that is 26-1000 nucleotides in length and contains a sequence selected from the group consisting of SEQ ID NOs:5-8, or a sequence complementary thereto.



- 1 31. The method of claim 30, wherein said nucleic acid probe is 26-50 nucleotides in length.
- 1 32. The method of claim 27, wherein the upstream primer contains SEQ ID NO:3 and the downstream primer contains SEQ ID NO:4.

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- 33. The method of claim 32, wherein each primer is 24-32 nucleotides in length.
- 34. The method of claim 33, wherein the detecting step includes hybridizing the amplification product to a nucleic acid probe that is 26-1000 nucleotides in length and contains a sequence selected from the group consisting of SEQ ID NOs:5-8, or a sequence complementary thereto.
- 35. The method of claim 34, wherein said nucleic acid probe is 26-50 nucleotides in length.